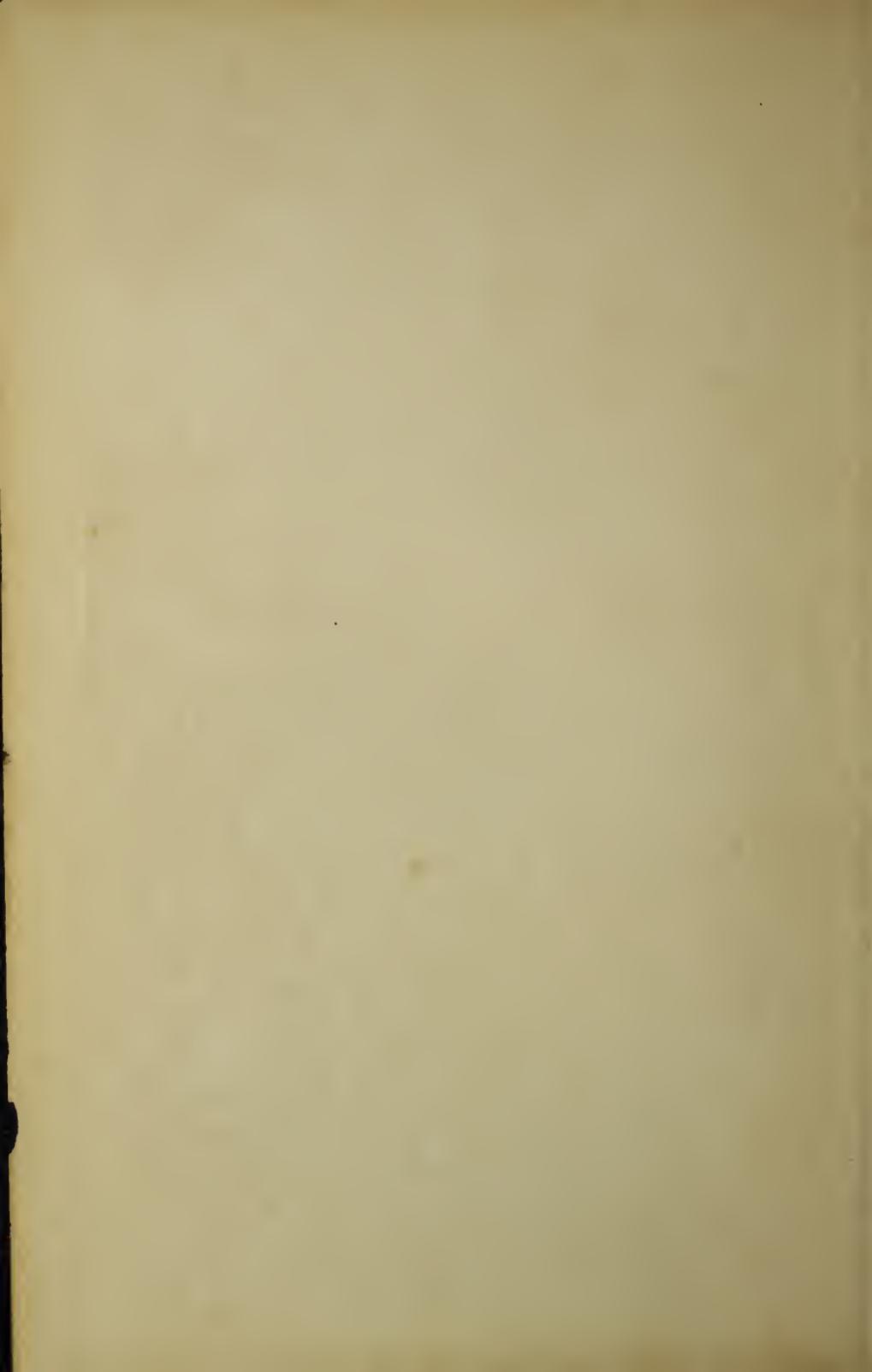


RATHANCAN
CASTLEDERMOT
ATHY

DA995
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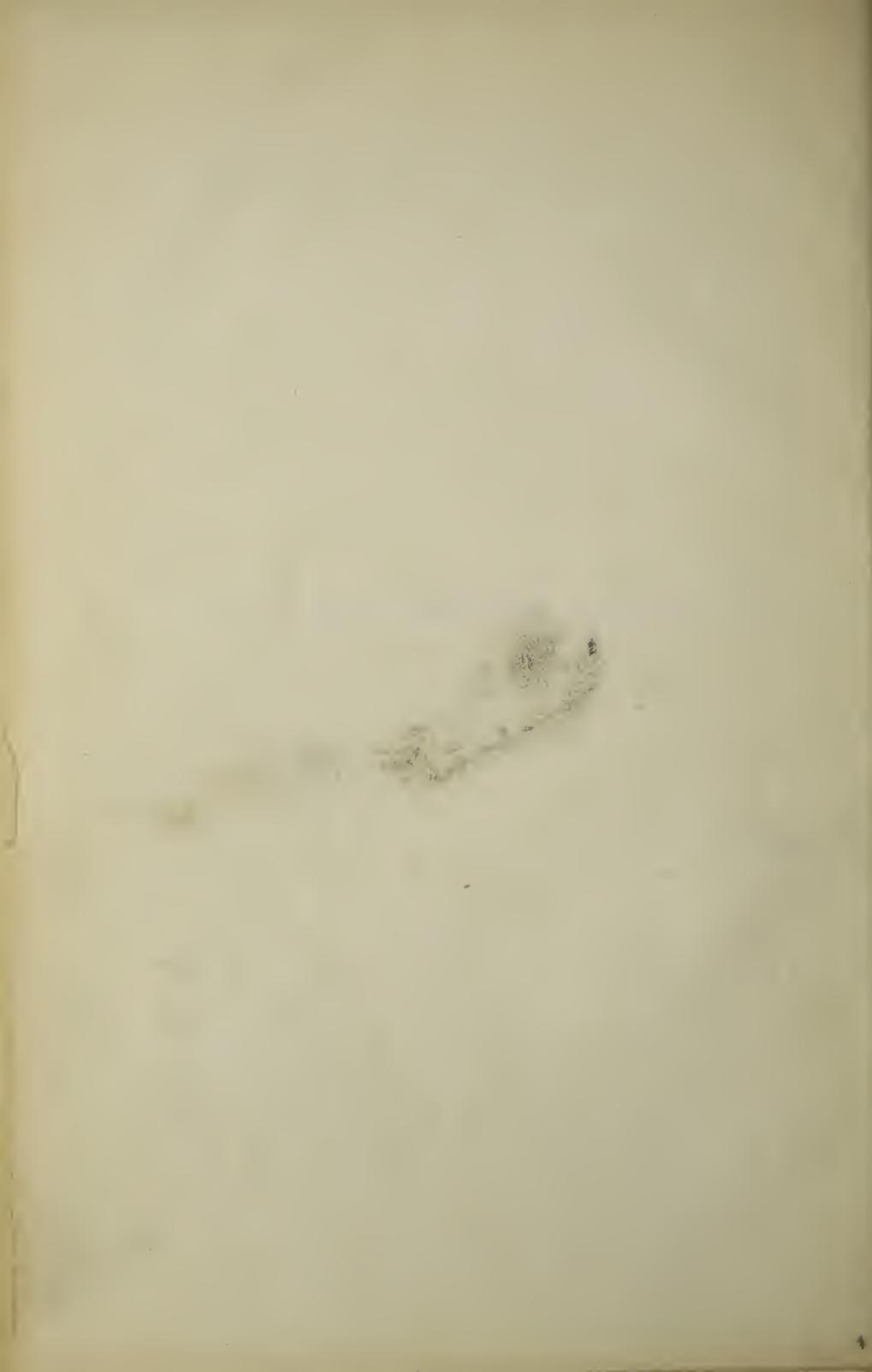


Lancaster
July 1911.



Rathangan, Castledermot, Athy.

1864.



DA995
R23

RATHANGAN.

RATHANGAN was called in Irish Rath-Imgain, Imgain's Fort. The rath from which it takes its name is in a field near the church, and is about 180 feet in diameter.*

In 1176 Strongbow granted the barony of Offaly, including Rathangan, to Maurice Fitzgerald.

In 1316 Edward Bruce, who had been crowned King of Ireland, having, with his army, wintered in Westmeath, marched through "Rathynegan" on his way to the south.†

On the 7th July, 1329 Richard, third Earl of Kildare, died at Rathangan, at the age of twelve years, and was buried at Kildare.

In 1534, at the time of the rebellion of "Silken Thomas," Rathangan Castle was strongly fortified and garrisoned.

* O'Donovan's Annals of the Four Masters.

† Grace's Annals.

In February, 1535, John Allen, Master of the Rolls, in a letter to Thomas Cromwell, Secretary of State, recommends that the castle should be taken by the Royal forces as soon as possible.* It was accordingly carried by assault in April.

Holinshed† relates that “when the Castel of Rathangan was woon, which was soone after the surrender of Maynoth, hee (the Earl of Kildare)‡ caused a drove of cattell to appear timely in the morning, hard by the towne. Such as kept the Fort suspecting it to be a bootie were trayned for the more part out of the castel, who were surprised by Thomas, that lay hard by in ambushe, and the greater number of them slaine.” The Earl however continued to harass the garrison. At one time “Mr. Thesaurer,§ sending owte of the Nass certen cartes of vittels to the castell of Rathangan, Thomas Fitzgerald, having knowledge thereof, furnished with the strength of Ochonor and other fals traitors, purposed to intercept the same, but Mr. Thesaurer, with such company as was with him, which as we hear saie was Musgrave, Dacres, and Thomas Eustace,|| hearing of ther intent, foloid

* State Papers. Henry VIII. vol. ii. p. 229.

† Holinshed's History of Ireland.

‡ Silken Thomas, tenth Earl of Kildare, who had lately succeeded to the Earldom.

§ Sir William Brabazon. || Cousin to the Earl.

and mett with him, and notwithstanding the doble number of them, as it is said, to him and his cumpany, he sett upon them, and so not oonlie, in conclusion, discomfite them, but killed sixteen of ther horsmen, and the capitaine of ther galloglas.”*

In July, 1535, the castle was retaken by the Earl. “The traitor, with the aide of Ochonor, assaulted agayne the court and castell of Rathangan, wherin was certen of the retynew of Sir William Bretons, who first looste the base curte, and after yelded the castell, which was brought to passe by the tradymant of Felom Boy Ochonor, whom, after he was indighted and arrayned of diverse treasons, murdours and felonies before us, at Kildare, befor our last comeing into Inglande, my Lord Deputie, without proces or order of law, constrainyd the shirif to delyver him at large, and after put him in trust for the vitteleng and oversight of the said garrison. Mr. Thesaurer, the next daie after, not having perfite knowlege therof, but thinking with his cumpany to make a jornaie into Allon, where the traytour was socored, which is not past four miles from the Naas, yit to be suer, whether it were true or not, resorted thitherwarde; and if knowlege had not been sent befor, by some of thois which were in his owne cumpany, as al be

* State Papers, vol. ii. p. 260.

fals traitours of theis Geraldines, he had founde Thomas, with many of his cumpany, within the castell and curte ; but or he came, they fledd, and so he entred the castell and court agayne ; albeit, no Inglyshman wold tary in it to kepe it, which had loost it twies befor, and Kildare also. Wherupon he entreed Sir James Fitz Gerald to take upon him the keping of it, graunting him wagis for as many of his men as shuld be in it ; and so he hath warded it with horsemen, gunners, and other footemen, and kepeth it salvelie hitherto.”*

Sir James Fitz Gerald was uncle to the Earl, and notwithstanding his services to the crown, was in the following February arrested and sent to England, where he was confined in the tower of London with his nephew, and after a year’s imprisonment executed.

In a “Memorial for the winning of Leynster,” forwarded by the Council of Ireland to the King in 1537, it was proposed that the younger son or brother of some good English family should receive out of the forfeited lands the manor of Rathangan with the barony of Offaly.† And in the same year W. Cowley suggests that the various border castles should be given to “such as are marchars, men of warre, hav-

* State Papers, ii. 264.

† Ib. 414.

ing good retynues ;” and among others the “ Fassagh of Rathaingan.”* In another letter it is suggested that when the Lord Deputy has conference with the Irish chiefs, in order to save expense, he should reside in one of the border fortresses. “ If with O’Chonour, he be in . . . Rathangan,” which was on the border of that chief’s country, Offaly.†

In March, 1538, the Lord Deputy wrote that he had been trying to induce O’Connor to submit. “ Apon the morowe he cam, upon save conducte, unto my sayd servaunt, into the Kinges castell of Rathangan, and with hym from thens to the citie of Dublyn, where he made hys humble submission.”‡

Among the articles sent by the Irish Council to England against the Lord Deputy, Lord Graney, was, that he quartered his soldiers on Rathangan and other royal towns without payment.§

Among the accusations against Gerald the eleventh Earl, and in consequence of which he was sent prisoner to England, in 1575, are, that he had conferences with Kedagh O’Connor, a noted rebel, both before and after the latter had plundered Walter Stanhurst in 1573. And Hubert M’Thomas, a follower of O’Connor, confessed that Kedagh O’Connor,

* State Papers, ii. 446.

† Ib 490.

‡ Ib. 560.

§ Ib. iii. 42.

also a rebel, took a hawk from Mr. Colley, and sent it by him to the Earl at Rathangan. The night before he delivered the hawk, Hubert slept at the house of Connor O'Hevrin in "Loughballywhogan" near Rathangan. Towards the next evening he went to Rathangan, and in a lane leading to it he met Kedagh, Phelim O'Connor, one of his followers, and James Hickey the Earl's "harbinger." All four then went towards Rathangan. Kedagh and Phelim supped in a house in the town, and Hubert and Hickey went to Hickey's chamber beyond the bridge. In the morning they went to the Earl's castle, and as they entered the gate Hickey turned to Hubert and said : "Say the hawk is from Morice M'Water owt of Shil-lela." After waiting some time Hickey came from the Earl and "willed Thomas Enos, the falconer, to receave the Hawke."* That in the spring of 1574 the Earl sent for Teag M'Gilpatrick O'Connor, an open rebel, to meet him at Rathangan, and having ordered all to leave the room, except William Birmingham of "Logfey," he "took a booke and swore the sayde Teag that whether it was warre or peace he should be at his commandement." At Whitsuntide, 1574, Kedagh O'Connor, with twenty horse, after plundering Birmingham's country, was passing by a ford, called Belathlyne, near Rathangan, when

* State Papers, MS.

the Earl, who was riding, seeing them, sent his servant, James Hickey, to inquire who they were. On his return the Earl went to meet Kedagh and had a long conference with him. Kedagh on returning to his followers told them that the Earl had asked him "whose garrons those were," and on his replying, "They were garrons which he had *for the long day*," the Earl said, "It was needful for to have them so."*

When the Earl was arrested in Dublin on the 8th May, 1575, and imprisoned in the Castle, the Lord Keeper (the Archbishop of Dublin) and the Treasurer (Sir Edward Fitton) went to Rathangan, escorted by Captains Harington and Deering, and their troops, to arrest the Earl's sons. On the 12th May the Lord Deputy, the L. Keeper and the Treasurer wrote to Lord Burghley : "We the Keeper of the Great Seal and the Treasurer returned from the Erles howse of Rathangan and brought with us the Erles 2 eldest sonnes, whome we fownde there, and since that his youngest (whome we sent a company of Harington's bande for, where he was at nurse) is come also. His howses and all things in them we have put upon safe stay and inventory." The name of the foster-father of the youngest child was Garret M'Patrick O'Connor. On the 15th they wrote that though they had arrived suddenly at Rathangan, unaccount-

* State Papers, MS.

able rumours had preceded them, and consequently they had found there much less money than they expected, and no documents of importance.*

In his examination on the 8th December the Earl denied that he had ever seen Kedagh O'Connor to his knowledge, or had any communication with the O'Connors, except such as was lawful. James Hickey, the Earl's harbinger also being examined, denied that he had ever brought any of the O'Connors to the outer gate of Rathangan ; but stated that he had met Kedagh, who was asking for food at the Vicar's house, and on it being refused him, Hickey took him and his band of thirty kerne to an ale-house ; and when Kedagh wanted to plunder the Vicar in revenge for his refusal, he dissuaded him from doing so. He also stated that a boy, who brought a hawk from Maurice Fitzgerald to the Earl, lodged at his house about that time.†

The manor of Rathangan having been part of the dower of the widow of Henry, twelfth Earl of Kildare, the castle appears to have fallen to ruin.

In 1744 a lease for ever of Rathangan and 929 Irish acres, was made to Mr. Boyle Spencer. He built Rathangan House, and having pulled down the ruins of the castle, he built near its site the house

* State Papers, MS. † State Papers, MS.

afterwards occupied by his great-grandson the Hon. George P. Colley.

When the rebellion broke out in May, 1798, Rathangan was attacked by the insurgents under "Captain" Doorly of Lullymore, an island in the bog of Allen, about four miles from the town. The garrison consisted of a corps of yeomanry under the command of Captain James Spencer, agent to the Duke of Leinster, and half a company of the North Cork Militia. These, after some resistance, having evacuated the town and retreated to Philipstown, the insurgents planted a "tree of liberty" in the streets, and formed barricades of carts and barrels. Some of them then went to Rathangan House, where they murdered Mr. Spencer. They were however soon afterwards attacked by the Black Horse and the South Cork Militia, with a field piece, and though they defended themselves for some time by firing from the barricades and windows, they were forced to retreat to the bog, where they dispersed.

Mr. Spencer's eldest co-heiress, Esther, married the sixth Viscount Harberton, who made Rathangan House his principal residence, as did his son the fifth Viscount, until he sold the lease of the property to the Duke of Leinster in 1858.



CASTLEDERMOT.

THE ancient name of Castledermot, or Tristledermot, as it was also sometimes called, was Disert Diarmada, *i. e.*, St. Dermot's Hermitage. This Saint was son of Aedh Roin. He erected a monastery there about A.D. 500, on the site probably of the present church, to which is attached the round tower. His festival is on the 21st June.

Castledermot was the principal town of Hy Muireadhaigh or O'Murthy, a territory which comprised the southern part of Kildare, including the Baronies of Kilkea and Moone, Narragh and Rheban, and part of Connell.

The following notices are taken from the Annals of the Four Masters.

Age of Christ, 841. The plundering of Disert Diarmada by the foreigners of Cael-Uisge (Narrow Water in co. Down).

842. Cumsadh, son of Derero, and Maelnach, son

of Sadchadach, who were both Bishops and Ancho-
rites, died in one night at Disert Diarmada.

867. Eodois, son of Doughal, suffered martyrdom
from the foreigners at Disert Diarmada.

885. Sneidhias, wise man of Disert Diarmada, tutor
of Cormac, son of Cuileanan, died.

(In 903 was fought the battle of Ballaghmoon,
about three miles from Castledermot, when Cormac
M'Cuileanan, King of Munster and Bishop of Cashel,
was slain. He was buried at Castledermot, where
one of the stone crosses may perhaps have been
erected to commemorate the spot. The field of
battle and the stone on which the King's head was
cut off by a common soldier, Fiach Ua Ugfaden, of
Denlis, is still pointed out.)

1037. Dunchad, son of Dunlaing, King of Leinster,
was taken prisoner at Disert Diarmada, and blinded
by Donnchad M'Gillaphadraig; and he died imme-
diately after.

1038. Ua Gabhaidh, distinguished Bishop of Disert
Diarmada died.

1040. Disert Diarmada plundered by Diarmaid,
son of Mael-na-mbo, Lord of Ui Ceinnsealaigh; and
he carried away many prisoners from the oratory.

1042. Mae Raith, son of Gorman, son of Freasach,
Lord of Ui Bairrche, and his wife, were slain at
Disert Diarmada by the Ui Ballain.

At the time of the English invasion, 1169, the territory of Hy Muireadhaigh, was occupied by the O'Tooles, who had their great rath or fort on the hill of Mallaghreelan, to the north of Castledermot, and who were driven from it and forced to take refuge in the fastnesses of Wicklow.

In 1182, Hugh de Lacy erected a castle at Castledermot.

In 1200, the town and manor were granted by King John, with other estates, to Walter de Ridlesford, Baron of Bray, who founded a Priory or Hospital for Croached Friars outside the town walls.* A tower of this monastery still exists, of which, however, tradition assigns the erection to the Knights of St. John.†

Emelina, only daughter and heiress of de Ridlesford, married Sir Stephen de Longespie, Lord Justice of Ireland, who died in 1260, leaving the manors of Castledermot and Kilkea to his daughter Emelina, wife of Maurice, 3rd Baron of Offaly.

In 1264, in consequence of a feud between the Geraldines, and de Burghs, the Baron of Offaly, at a meeting held in the church of Castledermot to discuss their differences, with his nephew, John FitzThomas, afterwards 1st Earl of Kildare, arrested Richard de

* Ware.

† Archdale's *Monasticon*, p. 189.

Capella, the Lord Justice, Richard de Burgh, son and heir of the Earl of Ulster, Theobald Butler, John Cogan, and other adherents of the de Burghs, and confined them in his castles of Lea and Dumanase.

In 1276 a parliament was held in Castledermot.

In 1295 aid was granted by parliament to enclose the town with walls. The remains of a great part of this wall may still be traced.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, a Franciscan Monastery* was founded by Thomas FitzMaurice, father of the 1st Earl of Kildare, of which the ruins still exist.

In 1315, Edward Bruce took possession of the town, but in 1316, the Irish, who were marching to join his forces, having been defeated, he abandoned it, having sacked it and plundered the monasteries of their books, vestments, and church ornaments.†

In 1328 a chapel dedicated to St. Mary was added to the Abbey church by Thomas 2nd Earl of Kildare.

In 1377 a parliament was held, and a mint established at Tristledermot.

In 1405, McMurchy waged war with the English, during which Contae Regh (Wexford) together with

* *Monas. Hib.*, 312.

† *Grace's An.*

Carlow and Disert Diarmada, were plundered and burnt.*

In 1408, the Lord Deputy, Lord Scrope, died at Castledermot of the plague.†

In 1414, the O'Mores and O'Dempseys, having invaded the Pale, the Lord Justice, Thomas Cranley, Archbishop of Dublin, marched against them, and having reached Castledermot, sent forward his troops against the enemy, who were encamped at Kilkea, while he went in procession with his clergy to the church and celebrated high mass during the conflict, in which his forces gained a complete victory.‡

In 1484, Gerald, 8th Earl of Kildare, held in Dublin a parliament, which granted him a subsidy towards the erection of a castle at Tristledermot.

In 1496, and again in 1499 the Earl, as Lord Deputy, held parliaments in the town. The present Petty Sessions Court-house is said to stand on the site of the castle and parliament house, in which a mint was established in 1499.

In 1532 Gerald, ninth Earl, allowed his followers to plunder the King's subjects "at the fair of Tristledermot, crying havocke upon the King's subjects, which thither were resorted, caused them in his own

* Annals of the Four Masters. † Dowling's Annals.

‡ Holinshed.

presence to be spoiled and robbed of their goods, and divers of them murdred most cruelly and trayterously.”*

In 1534 among the castles belonging to the Earl Kildare are mentioned “the castell and wallyd town of Tristeldermot.”†

During the rebellion of “Silken Thomas” Castlemermot was garrisoned for three weeks in 1534, by some of the Irish allies of Lord Offaly, while he was besieging Dublin.‡ In September of that year however it was taken and occupied in the king’s name by the Earl of Ossory.§

In 1537 it was proposed to form a strong garrison there, “Casteldermot being walled alreidye.”||

Among the articles against Lord Graney, late Lord Deputy, forwarded to England by the Irish Council, was one for quartering his soldiers on “Castelldermot.”¶

After the dissolution of the monasteries, the Franciscan Abbey and lands were granted to Sir Henry Harrington, and the Hospital and lands of St. John’s to the ancestors of the Archbold family.

In 1552 Castledermot, which had been forfeited to

* Act of Attainder of the Earl of Kildare and others, 1536.

† State Papers, ii. 184.

‡ Ib. 251.

§ Ib.

|| Ib. ii. 413.

¶ Ib. iii. 42.

the crown, was restored with other estates to Gerald, eleventh Earl of Kildare.

In 1641, on the breaking out of the civil war, George, sixteenth Earl, as Governor of the County Kildare, appointed his distant cousin, Pierce Fitz-Gerald* of Ballyshannon, as Captain of the southern district, to command the garrison of Castledermot. For that purpose he was furnished out of the royal stores, with arms and ammunition for one hundred men. Having procured a warrant from the Earl to the Rev. John Walsh to deliver to him the castle, he in December seized all Mr. Walsh's property, which was within or outside the castle, and carrying it off as booty, joined the army of the Catholic Confederation at Kilkenny, and was there appointed Colonel of a regiment.

Castledermot was then alternately in the hands of the opposite parties. In 1644 M. de la Boullaye le Gouz, a French traveller slept there and calls it "Castle Dairmon, a little village under the dominion of the Catholics."

In 1650 "Dermot's Castle" was taken by the Parliamentary forces under Colonels Reynolds and Hewson, and its walls dismantled.†

In 1674 John, eighteenth Earl of Kildare, obtain-

* He had served in Flanders in the regt. of Owen Roe O'Neill.

† Borlase's History of the Rebellion, p. 255.

ed from Charles II. a grant to have a weekly market and two annual fairs in the town.

In 1690 after the battle of the Boyne the army of William III. on their march to Limerick reached Castledermot on the 14th August. The king himself slept at Belan, the house of Mr. Ed. Stratford, ancestor of the Earl of Aldborough. There he received the news of the defeat of his fleet by the French off Beachy Head.

Story, in his Impartial History, p. 107, says : "From Timalin we marched to Castle-Dermot, where there stood in old time two or three Religious Houses, the ruins of which as yet remain ; one of these was of the Fryars Minors, sackt and plundered by the Scots under Bruce, in the year 1316. In which year the Irish were here also overthrown by Edward Bottilar (or Butler) Lord Justice of Ireland. Here the king received some packets from England, giving him a further account of his fleet, and sea affairs, which was easily understood not to be very grateful, and as is supposed was the occasion of our slow marches. Several Protestants every day came to the camp, all expressing their great joy and satisfaction for his Majesty's presence and their deliverance. The army rested a day at Castledermot, and the next day marched beyond Carlow."

In 1734 a charter school was founded at Castle-

dermot ; the site and a portion of the funds being provided by Robert, nineteenth Earl of Kildare. It was the first erected in Ireland.

In 1798 a large force of insurgents from Kildare and Wicklow, who were marching against Carlow, made an attempt to occupy Castledermot, but were repulsed by a company of the 6th regiment, who were quartered there, under the command of Captain Mince.

The antiquities of Castledermot consist of the round tower attached to the church, and in the church-yard two stone crosses, a tomb stone apparently of an abbot, and another with a curious circular perforation ; the ruins of the Franciscan abbey ; a tower of the Priory of Crouched Friars ; and the remains of the walls, and of a small portion of the Tullow gate.

WOODSTOCK CASTLE
AND
WHITE CASTLE OF ATHY.

Woodstock Castle was built about the year 1190 by Richard de St. Michael, Baron of Rheban, to defend an important ford over the Barrow, near Athy. His only child, Rohesia, heiress of Athy and Woodstock, married Thomas Fitz-Maurice, and had an only son, John, created Earl of Kildare.

There is a tradition that this John Fitz-Thomas, while he was an infant, was in the castle when there was an alarm of fire. In the confusion that ensued the child was forgotten, and when the servant returned to seek him, the room in which he lay was found in ruins. While they were lamenting his supposed death they heard a strange noise proceeding from the top of one of the towers; on looking up they saw a monkey or ape, which was usually kept chained, carefully holding the child in its arms. The Earl afterwards,

in gratitude for his preservation, adopted the monkey for his crest and supporters, and some of his descendants took the additional motto of “Non immemor beneficii.”

In 1500 Gerald, eighth Earl of Kildare, erected the castle called the White Castle, on the opposite or east bank of the river, to defend the bridge of Athy.

In 1534 these two castles, which had been strongly garrisoned by Thomas, tenth Earl, at the time of his rebellion, were taken by the Earl of Ossory, but were soon retaken by the Earl of Kildare, as, in February, 1535, John Allen, the Master of the Rolls, in a letter in the State Paper Office, recommends the taking of the “Bridge of Athie;”* and in another letter it is mentioned that in the preceding September “Athye” had been occupied by the Irish allies of the Earl.† These castles were retaken, but appear to have suffered much in these various assaults, as in July, 1536, “My Lord Deputie went, according to the conclusion of the Counsaile, to the reedifyeng and fortifieng of the manour of Wudstocke, and the bridge of Athie.”‡ And on the 25th of the same month the Council state that they have left the “Thesaurer of Warres”§ for “the contynueng of the woorks at the Bridge of Athy and Woodstock.”||

* State Papers, ii. 228. † Ib. 251. ‡ Ib. 345.

§ Sir W. Brabazon. || State Papers, ii. 350.

In a "Memorial for the winning of Leynster," forwarded by the Council of Ireland to the King in 1537, it is proposed that to the younger brothers of good English families should be assigned forfeited lands.. As, to "Ananother Woodstocke, with the Barony of Rheban."* And in the same year Robert Cowley recommends that among the border castles to be assigned to "suche as are marchers, men of warre, having good retynues," should be "Fassah Reban" and "Wodstocke."†

John Allen soon after recommended that when a parley was held by the Lord Deputy with any of the Irish chiefs, he should reside in one of the border castles. "If with O'More in Athie."‡

In 1554 the two castles, with the manors attached to them, were restored to Gerald, eleventh Earl of Kildare.

In May, 1599, John Dymmok, in his Treatise of Ireland,§ wrote : "This night the army lodged a myle from Athye, which hath beene a great markett towne, but brought by these late wars into the state of a pore village. Athie is divided into two partes by the ryver of Barrow, over the which lyeth a stone bridge, and upon yt a castle accupied by James Fitz-

* State Papers, ii. 414.

† Ib. 446.

‡ Ib. 490.

§ Irish Arch. Society's Tracts, vol. ii. p. 31.

pierce, a gentleman of the famylie of the Geraldines, who, so soone as our army approached the castle, yeelded himselfe to the mercy of the Lord Lieutenant (Earl of Essex). . . . The Lord Lieutenant havinge put a guard in the castle of Athye, passed his forces over the Barrow by the bridge of the castle, which ryver being not otherwyse fordable but with difficultie, and the bridg thereof the onely waye which leadeth into the Queene's county, the importance of this enterprize easily appeareth (without any amplification) unto every ignorant sence. At Woodstocke (a village scituate upon the Barrow) his Lordship expected victualls a daye or two for the relieve of Maryburge. . . . Durynge the tyme that our army incamped at Woodstock, the rebels attempted the stealinge of some of our horses, which being perceived by Sir Christopher Sentlaurence (sonne to the Lord of Hoth), he passed the ryver naked, and beinge followed by his men, reskewed the praye and returned with the heade of a rebell. About the same tyme the rebels presented themselves 200 stronge to the sight of the castle of Rheban, distant a myle from Woodstok, where a parte of the army then laye, but upon sight of the Erle of Southampton, who hasted towards them in most soldier lyke order, with a small troope of horse and foote, they retyred themselves to their boggs and from thence to

their woods. As soone as the Lord Lieutenant was provided of vittels, he marched with his army towarde the forte of Maryborow in the Queene's countye."

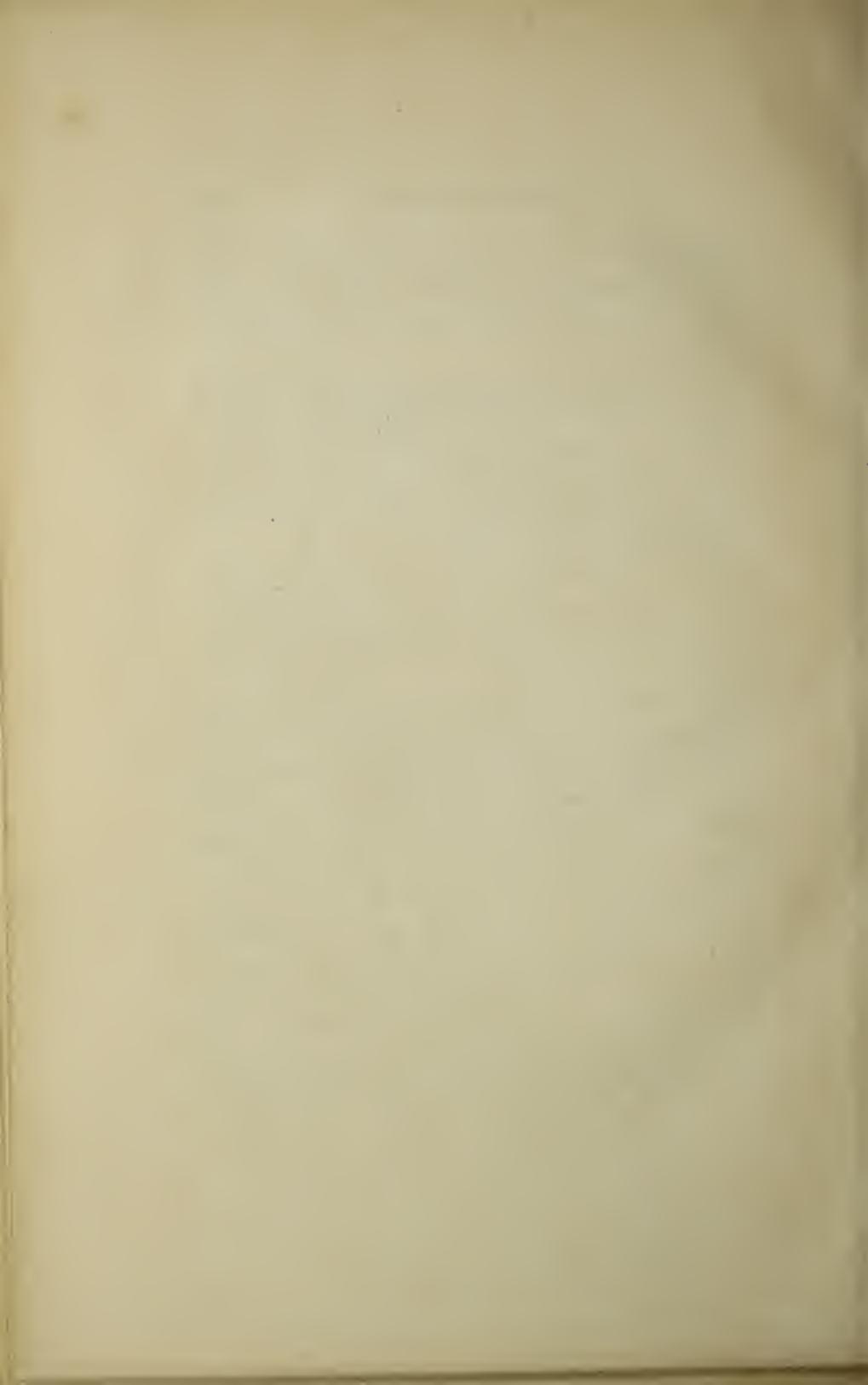
In 1642, during the civil wars, Woodstock and Athy were taken by the Catholics, but were soon retaken by the Marquis of Ormonde.

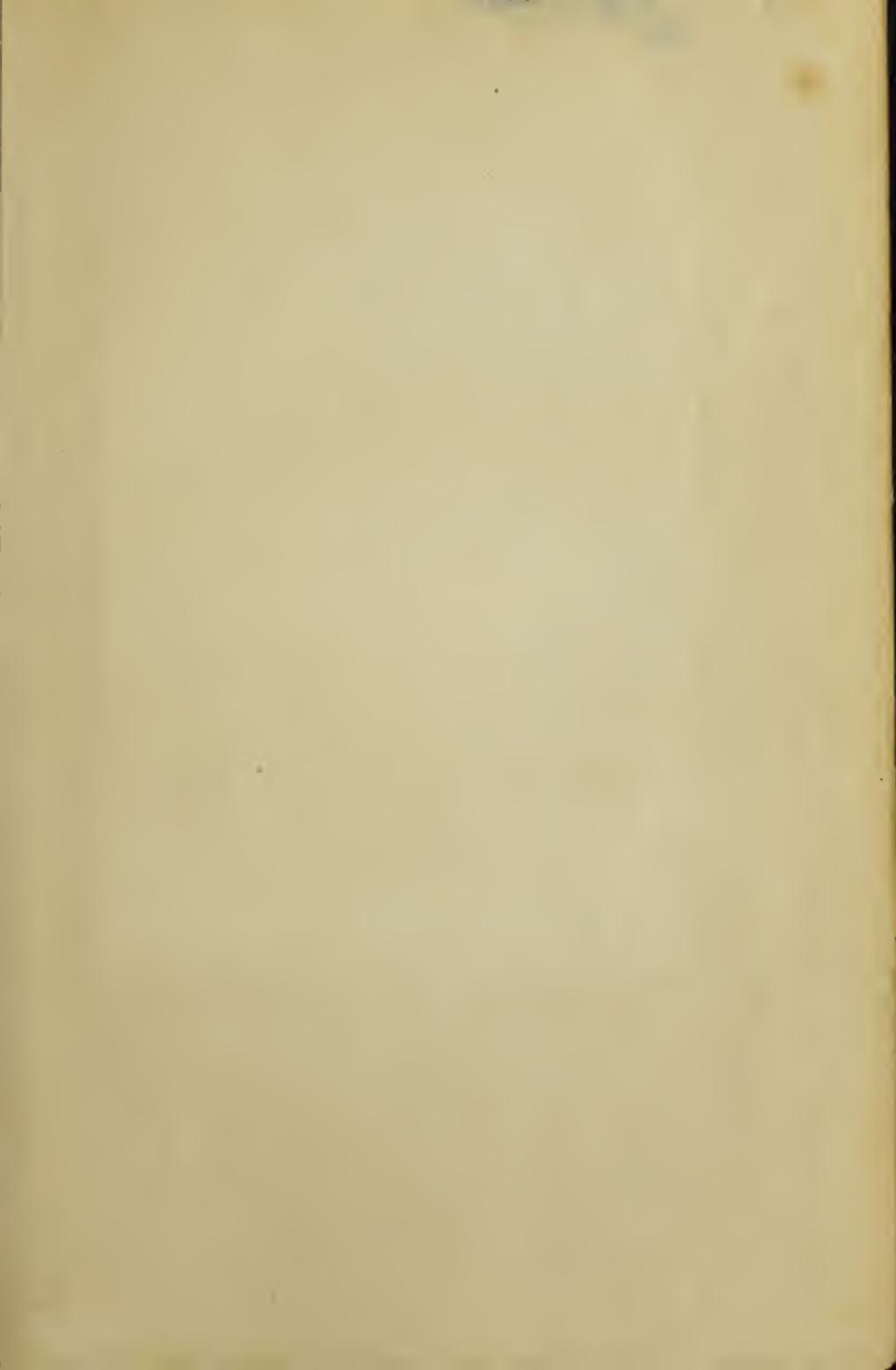
In 1647 they were again surprized by Owen Roe O'Neill, who put the garrison to the sword ; and were again retaken by Lord Inchiquin.

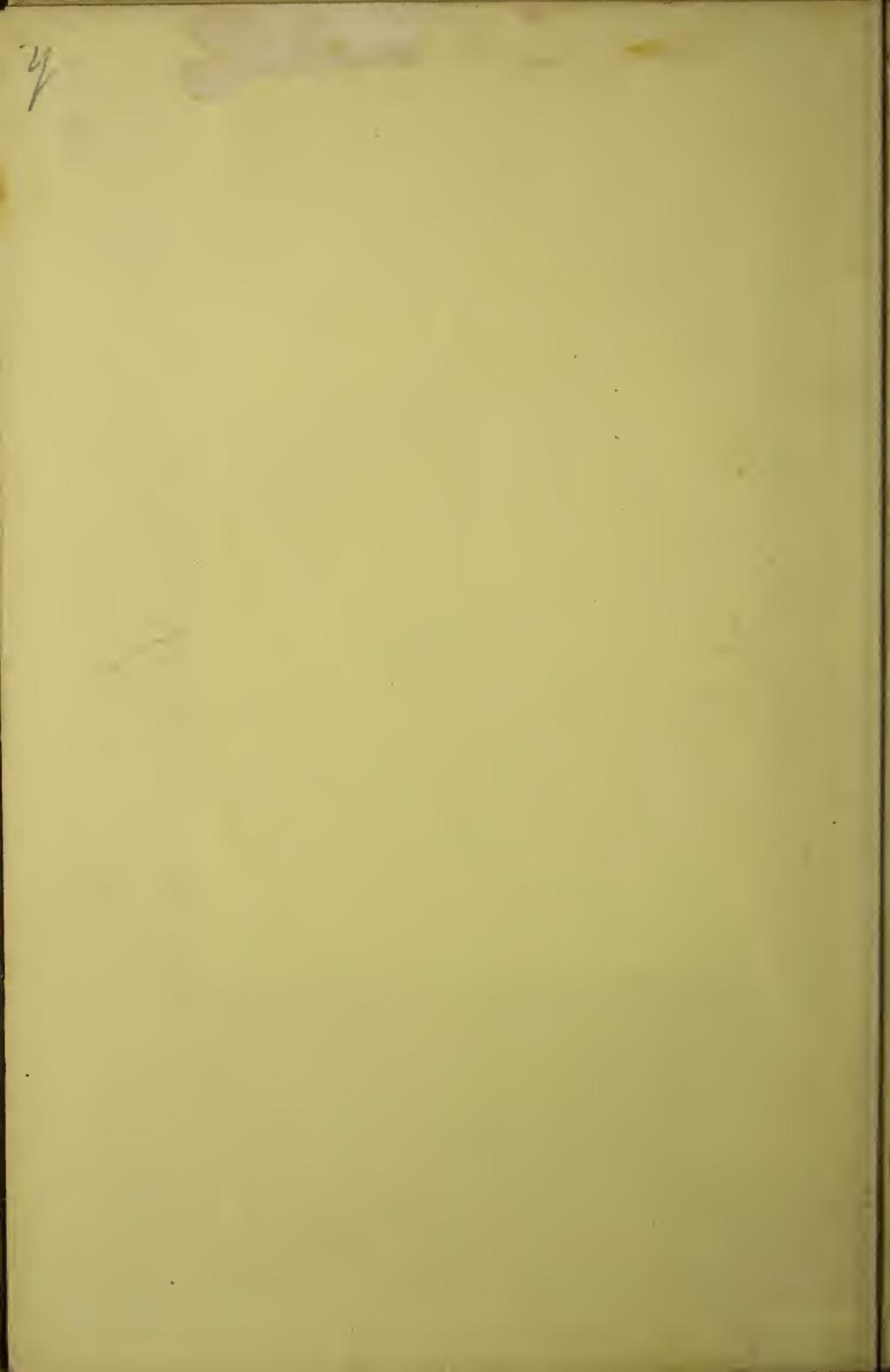
In 1648 the Catholics under Colonel Preston again beseiged and took them, but Colonels Reynolds and Hewson, the Parliamentary commanders, retook them in 1650.

Since that time Woodstock Castle has been uninhabited and is now a ruin.

The White Castle was subsequently used as a county prison, and is at present occupied as a police barrack.







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